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[Dear Permission to Be Powerful Reader, Gaslighting isn't just
someone telling...](#)



Dear *Permission to Be Powerful* Reader,

Gaslighting isn't just someone telling you, "*That never happened.*"

It's far more insidious than that.

It's someone telling you:

- ☞ "You don't actually feel that way."
- ☞ "That's not what you meant."
- ☞ "You're just being sensitive."
- ☞ "You're lying to yourself."

It's not just erasing events—it's erasing **you**.

It's the slow, relentless process of making you doubt your own emotions, thoughts, and memories.

Until one day, you wake up and don't trust yourself at all.

What Gaslighting Really Looks Like

It doesn't always come with shouting. It doesn't always come from obvious abusers. Sometimes, it comes from people you love.

- ☞ A parent who says, "We gave you everything," when you bring up how neglected you felt.
- ☞ A partner who says, "You always twist my words," when you finally try to set a boundary.
- ☞ A friend who says, "Don't be so dramatic," when you share something that hurt you.

One woman told me her ex would yell at her for "overreacting," even as he admitted cheating.

Another told me her mother would say, "I never said that," with such calm certainty that she started recording their conversations—just to prove to herself that she wasn't going crazy.

You don't need bruises to be a victim.

Sometimes the deepest damage is psychological. Subtle. Denied. And devastating.

How It Feels

At first, it feels like confusion.
Then it feels like self-doubt.
Eventually, it feels like shame.

- ☞ Maybe you start apologizing for things that aren't your fault.
- ☞ Maybe you hesitate before speaking, afraid you'll be told you're "wrong" about your own experiences.
- ☞ Maybe you replay conversations in your head, obsessively wondering if *you* were the one out of line.

Little by little, you stop trusting your instincts.
You start filtering everything through **their** version of reality.
And before you know it, you've lost your ability to tell the difference between truth and manipulation.

The Psychology Behind It

Dr. Robin Stern, author of *The Gaslight Effect*, explains how gaslighting isn't about lies—it's about **power**.

Gaslighters don't just want you confused.
They want you **dependent**.

By making you question your perceptions, they insert themselves as the final authority on what's "real."
You're not just being manipulated—you're being slowly trained to **surrender your inner compass**.

This is why victims often stay.
Not because they're weak.
But because they've been made to believe they can't trust themselves anymore.

It Sounds Like...

- ☞ “I never said that.”
- ☞ “You’re making things up.”
- ☞ “Stop being dramatic.”
- ☞ “You always twist my words.”
- ☞ “You need help.”
- ☞ “You’re crazy.”

And over time, without realizing it, you start to agree.

You agree to question yourself instead of them.

You agree to make yourself smaller so they don’t lash out.

You agree to ignore the warning signs—because it’s easier than the alternative.

Until one day, you wake up and realize—

You’re living in a reality that isn’t even yours.

The Real Theft

The most dangerous thing gaslighting steals from you isn’t the truth.
It’s your ability to **recognize** it.

It makes you abandon yourself.

Gaslighting doesn’t just control you.

It makes you **control yourself**.

Cultural Gaslighting: When the Whole System Says “You’re Wrong”

Gaslighting isn't always personal. Sometimes it's **systemic**.

- ☞ When society tells women they're "too emotional" to lead.
- ☞ When survivors of racism are told they're "imagining things."
- ☞ When children of narcissists are told to "honor thy parents" no matter what.

This is *mass gaslighting*.

Whole generations grow up believing their anger is wrong.

That their instincts are unreliable.

That speaking up makes them bad people.

If you've ever been told to "keep the peace" by swallowing your truth,
That was gaslighting too.

The Long-Term Cost of Gaslighting

What people don't talk about enough is the *after*.

The echo that lingers even when the gaslighter is gone.

You start gaslighting yourself.

- ☞ "Maybe I misunderstood them."
- ☞ "I should've been more chill."
- ☞ "I don't want to seem crazy."
- ☞ "It's probably just me."

This voice doesn't scream.

It whispers.

It dresses up as reason, maturity, even self-awareness.

But it's not truth.

It's internalized manipulation.

And it shows up in every part of your life:

- You second-guess your instincts in business.
- You don't trust your gut in dating.
- You apologize before you speak.
- You overexplain just to feel safe.

This is not your fault.
But it **is** your responsibility to unlearn.

Reclaiming Your Reality

Healing from gaslighting is not about proving anything to anyone.
It's about coming back home to yourself.

It starts small:

- Writing down what you *actually* felt—even if you're not sure it “makes sense.”
- Saying “no” before you justify why.
- Noticing when your body tenses around certain people—and trusting that signal.
- Letting yourself be “too much” on purpose. Loud. Honest. Human.

It's uncomfortable at first.

Because healing from gaslighting is not a return to who you were.
It's an arrival at who you've always been—**beneath the distortion.**

As that real self returns, clarity comes back with it.
Boundaries get stronger.
Your voice gets louder.
The fog begins to lift.

Some People Won't Like This Version of You

And that's okay.

Some people only knew the version of you who doubted herself.
Who walked on eggshells.
Who twisted into a shape that made *them* comfortable.

They may not recognize you anymore.

Let them be confused.

You don't exist to make other people feel right.
You exist to be **whole**.

You don't need their approval.
You need your own permission to **be powerful**.

And you're already giving it to yourself by reading this.

One Final Truth

If someone consistently makes you feel small, confused, or crazy—it's not a relationship.
It's a power dynamic.

You're not here to play a role in someone else's story.
You're here to live your own.

So trust what you feel.
Trust what you remember.
Trust what your body is telling you—especially when your mind is unsure.

Your clarity is not a threat.
Your emotions are not evidence of failure.
They are evidence that you are **alive**.

And the moment you believe yourself again?

That's when everything starts to change.

That's when your reality becomes **yours** again.

Try This: 5 Self-Checks for Gaslighting Recovery

1. What's the first moment I remember doubting myself?

Track it. It didn't start with them. It started with a rupture in trust—yours.

2. When do I feel most confused around this person?

That's often a clue. Clarity is a nervous system signal of safety.

3. What do I *know* deep down, but keep silencing?

Trust your body. It often tells the truth before your mind can.

4. Do I apologize just to “end the tension”?

That's not peacekeeping—it's self-erasure.

5. Who would I be if I trusted myself 10% more?

Try that version of you on for a day. Watch what changes.

And Maybe That's the Scariest Part

Not just that someone lied to you.
But that somewhere along the way...
you started lying to yourself.

You told yourself it wasn't that bad.
That maybe you *were* being dramatic.
That if you could just be more understanding, more forgiving, more patient

They'd finally see you. Hear you. Love you.

But gaslighting doesn't stop because you shrink.
It *thrives* on that shrinking.

And the smaller you get, the louder their voice becomes.
Until it becomes your own.

That voice can be unlearned.

You don't have to keep carrying their doubt in your throat.

You can hand it back.

You can say, "This story never belonged to me."

You can reclaim your reality.
Reclaim your voice.
Reclaim your self-trust.

And the moment you do?

You become someone gaslighting can no longer touch.

Until next time,

Anton Volney

Dancer. Writer. Buddhist



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